

Agricultural Management Assistance

Questions and Answers

Note: Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) is authorized under the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000, Title I, Section 133 (Public Law 106-224. Section 524(b), was further amended by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, (Farm Bill), Public Law 107-171, May 13, 2002.

AMA—Agricultural Management Assistance
NRCS—Natural Resources Conservation Service
USDA—U.S. Department of Agriculture
AMS—Agricultural Marketing Service
RMA—Risk Management Agency

Q. What is the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program?

A. The Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) is a voluntary program that provides financial assistance through long term contracts to agricultural producers on private lands to construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures; to plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and to mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming.

Q. Is AMA available nationwide?

A. AMA is available in 15 states where participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program is historically low. They are: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

Q. Where are AMA applications accepted?

A. Applications may be obtained and filed at any time with your local USDA Service Center or conservation district office. Applications also may be obtained through USDA's e-gov Web site at: <http://www.sc.egov.usda.gov>. Enter "Natural Resources Conservation Service" in the Agency field, "Agricultural Management Assistance" in the Program Name field, and "CCC-1200" in the Form Number field. Applications also may be accepted by cooperating conservation partners approved or designated by NRCS.

Q. What is the maximum cost-share amount allowed for each AMA contract?

A. The total AMA payments (from NRCS, AMS, and RMA) shall not exceed \$50,000 per participant for any fiscal year. The Federal cost share is 75 percent of the cost of an eligible practice.

Q. When may an interested party sign-up for the program?

A. Interested landowners may begin submitting AMA applications under a continuous sign-up. Cutoff dates for ranking the applications will be determined by the NRCS state conservationist in consultation with the State Technical Committee.

Q. Is a conservation plan required?

A. A conservation plan is required for the area covered in the application and becomes the basis for developing the AMA contract. NRCS will work with the landowner to develop a conservation plan.

Q. Will practices be maintained after contracts expire?

A. Landowners must agree to maintain cost-shared practices for the life of the practice, which may extend beyond the end of the contract. USDA hopes AMA participants will want to continue to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations.

Q. What land is eligible for AMA?

A. The following land is eligible for AMA:

- Cropland
- Hayland
- Pasture and rangeland
- Land used for subsistence purposes, and
- Other land (such as forestland) that produces crops or livestock where risk may be mitigated through operation diversification or change in resource conservation practices.

Q. What level of cost-sharing is available?

A. The Federal cost-share rate shall be 75 percent of the cost of an eligible practice, based on the percent of actual cost, or percent of actual cost with not-to-exceed limits, or flat rates. Participants will be paid based upon certification and verification of completion of the approved practice.

Q. What are incentive payments?

A. Incentive payments provide financial assistance to encourage producers to perform land management practices, such as nutrient management, manure management, integrated pest management, irrigation water management and wildlife habitat management.

Q. When are payments made?

A. Participants will be paid upon certification that the approved practice has been completed according to NRCS standards and specifications.

Q. How are applications selected for funding?

A. Applications are selected based on a state-developed ranking and selection process. The ranking criteria will emphasize:

- Construction or improvement of water management structures or irrigation structures.
- Planting trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality.
- Mitigating risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming.

Q. Is other assistance available through AMA?

A. NRCS has leadership for the conservation provisions of AMA. USDA's AMS is responsible for an organic certification cost-share program and RMA is responsible for mitigation of financial risk through an insurance cost-share program.

Q. Is additional information available on AMA?

A. If you need more information about AMA, please contact your local USDA Service Center listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local conservation district.

Information also is available on the World Wide Web at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farbill/2002/>.

For More Information

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